

*Supporting: HB 5534, An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities*

Good afternoon Co- chairs Senator Gerratana , Rep. Johnson, Vice-chairs Senator Slossberg and Rep. Philip Miller and to the other member of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Debra Harrison and I am a Case Manager for the Department of Developmental Services. I have worked in this department for over 31 years. I began working in direct care, at Mansfield Training School, and I am currently working as a Case Manager in the Individual and Family Support Division from the Meriden Office of DDS.

I work with individuals living in the community with vocational supports, and some who may have minimal residential supports. I also work with families whose sons or daughters live at home. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the committee today.

I am in support of Bill 5534; An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. With this bill, Case Managers like myself will be able to work with families from a supportive and planning position, rather than constantly working in crisis or emergency mode. Between the years 2005 and 2009, various types of funding were made available to individuals on the waiting list. The needs of the families continue to grow and the Department is constantly told to cut funding. As an agency we have been, and continue to be, as creative as possible with what we have. (Peter can no longer rob anything else from Paul.) The monies we work with are “recycled dollars” and these are generated by/from someone’s death, someone leaving the state, or someone entering into another agency (Corrections or Long Term Care facilities).

Some families who have their adult children residing at home are not asking for a lot. Remember, most adult children with disabilities are not driving themselves, not staying at home alone, or not hanging out with their friends, the way a typical individual may. RESPITE would give a family some rest from their grinding day to day care for their adult child. Unfortunately, our respite centers have long waiting lists and some individuals are only assigned once or twice a year. In the past, families could receive this support on a quarterly basis. Some/most families would benefit from residential supports such as: respite, 24 hr. supports, less than 24 hr. supports, supportive living, or community companion home. That’s why everyone has a different fingerprint. It’s critical to have various types of residential supports and the monies to sustain them.

It’s difficult to meet with a family to discuss the future, knowing there isn’t any new funding for current needs or enough recycled dollars try to plan for projected needs. Therefore, we operate in crisis.

The definition of Crisis - 1.dangerous or worrying time: a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown.

When we operate in Crisis we lose the planning and preparation, and the ability to offer supports that may have prevented the crisis to begin with.

This is one of the reasons this bill needs to be enacted, and why I am urging your support for HB 5534.

Thank you for your attention.